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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/036,801	12/21/2001	Richard J. Popillo	109.0017	4614
27997	7590	02/01/2006	EXAMINER	
PRIEST & GOLDSTEIN PLLC 5015 SOUTHPARK DRIVE SUITE 230 DURHAM, NC 27713-7736				CHOI, PETER H
		ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER
		3623		

DATE MAILED: 02/01/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/036,801	POPILLO ET AL.	
	Examiner Peter Choi	Art Unit 3623	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 21 December 2001.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-17 is/are pending in the application.
 - 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 1-17 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1)<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) 2)<input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) 3)<input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4)<input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____. 5)<input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) 6)<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: <u>Request for Information</u>. |
|--|--|

DETAILED ACTION

1. The following is a first office action upon examination of application number 10/036801. Claims 1-17 are pending in the application and have been examined on the merits discussed below.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

2. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

3. Claims 1-2 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Rob Cross and Kai Monahan's "Redesigning the Process" (reference 1-X; hereafter referred to as Cross et al.).

As per claim 1, Cross et al. teaches a method for increasing productivity of a business organization and customer satisfaction, comprising:

- (a) identifying and making an inventory of touchpoints (**identify points of customer contact; mapping of the activities performed in a loan approval process**) [Paragraphs 13, 18];
- (b) identifying projects (**identify improvement opportunities and evaluate which will provide the most impact to the organization**), based upon the inventory of touchpoints [Paragraph 6];
- (c) validating and prioritizing projects based on an analysis of customers' critical requirements and overall financial impact on the business organization (**identify improvement opportunities and evaluate which will provide the most impact to the organization; identifying appropriate solutions to close the gap between current and targeted operating levels**) [Paragraphs 6, 26];
- (d) rigorously executing the prioritized projects (**actively redesign core production processes and organizational infrastructures to boost efficiency and customer satisfaction**) [Paragraph 2]; and
- (e) measuring increases in productivity and customer satisfaction (**individual solutions then should be integrated into a holistic operating model of people, process, technology, and structural recommendations, which must be tested under different volume and customer requirement assumptions to ensure that the new process accommodates the distinct needs of customers, regulators and employees**) [Paragraph 44].

As per claim 2, Cross et al. teaches the method of claim 1, further including:

(f) designating an employee to be a core process owner (**targeted focus groups of 6 to 10 employees**), who is accountable for steps (a) through (e) [Paragraph 13].

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. Claims 6-7 and 16-17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cross et al.

As per claim 6, Cross et al. teaches the method of claim 1, wherein step (c) further comprises:

(b) constructing a business model and a set of business goals (**establish shared operating targets; organizational attributes serve as guides for project team members as they gather data and develop solutions, while performance measures define the standards by which the redesigned process will be**

evaluated; reach agreement on the high-priority customer service and profitability attributes that will define organizational success) [Paragraphs 6, 8, 10]; and

(c) identifying customer needs that are critical to quality (**analysis of the existing mortgage process and the customer values it aims to satisfy; reach agreement on a set of performance measures that support the attributes that define organizational success) [Paragraphs 6, 10].**

Although Cross et al. does not explicitly teach (a) segmenting a customer base according to modes of distribution, Official Notice is taken that the concept of customer segmentation is old and well known in the art. Dividing a customer base into groups of individuals that are similar in specific ways allows companies to target groups effectively and allocate resources to best effect. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to modify the teachings of Cross et al. to segment a customer base according to modes of distribution because the resulting combination will allow companies to decide what data to collect, how to analyze said collected data, and implement customized solutions in order to effectively meet the needs of customers, thereby increasing customer satisfaction, and efficiency.

As per claim 7, Cross et al. teaches the method of claim 6, wherein step (c) further comprises:

validating identified projects against the identified customer needs that are critical to quality (**analysis of where the current process falls short of meeting customer**

needs; realigning responsibilities to better suit the demand of customers)
[Paragraphs 6, 31].

As per claim 16, Cross et al. does not explicitly teach a system for increasing business productivity and customer satisfaction; comprising:

- (a) a server computer;
- (b) a network of terminals connected to the server, the server computer transmitting web pages to the terminal for the terminals for providing outputs to, and receiving inputs from, the terminals;
- (c) an electronic database, accessible by the main server computer, containing data relating to projects that have been identified by identifying and cataloguing touchpoints, and that have also validated against customer needs that are critical to quality;
- (d) the data in the database being presented at each terminal in web pages having varying levels of detail.

Cross et al. does not explicitly teach the step of storing data relating to projects that have been identified by identifying and cataloguing touchpoints and also validated against customer needs that are critical to quality. Cross et al. teaches the step of identifying and making an inventory of touchpoints (**identify points of customer contact; mapping of the activities performed in a loan approval process**) [Paragraphs 13, 18], identifying projects (**identify improvement opportunities and**

evaluate which will provide the most impact to the organization) based upon the inventory of touchpoints [Paragraph 6], and validating and prioritizing projects based on an analysis of customers' critical requirements and overall financial impact on the business organization (identify improvement opportunities and evaluate which will provide the most impact to the organization; identifying appropriate solutions to close the gap between current and targeted operating levels) [Paragraphs 6, 26].

Further, this is a product-by-process claim limitation. Even though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself. The patentability of a product does not depend on its method of production. If the product in the product-by-process claim is the same as or obvious from a product of the prior art, the claim is unpatentable even though the prior product was made by a different process. *In re Thorpe*, 777 F.2d 695, 698, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985).

Official Notice is taken that the concept of a network of computer terminals connected to a central server computer that transmits web pages is old and well established in the art. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to modify the teachings of Cross et al. to include a server computer that transmits web pages to a network of terminals via the Internet because the resulting combination would take advantage of the fact that Internet technology is easily available and low-cost and automates manually processes, reducing the amount of organizational resources needed to implement Business Process Re-engineering (data entry, data

analysis, data storage and archival, etc.), and enables organizations to create easily accessible communication networks that can be accessed from all across the globe.

Official Notice is also taken that the use of databases to store data is old and well established in the art. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to modify the teachings of Cross et al. to include databases because the resulting combination would enable organizations to maintain historical records of information, data and forms, while also providing a central repository of such information can that be remotely accessed.

Official Notice is taken that the concept of presenting data to users through the Internet in the form of web pages is old and well established in the art. It is inherent that data presented on different web pages have varying levels of detail. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the teachings of Cross et al. to present data to users in the form of web pages over the Internet, because the resulting combination would provide (remote) access to simplified, summarized visualizations of data to users otherwise incapable of interpreting the raw data.

Cross et al. does not expressly teach the type of data stored in the database, or the level of detail of data presented to users, as recited in claim 16. However, these differences are only found in the non-functional descriptive material and are not functionally involved in the steps recited nor do they alter the recited structural

elements. The recited method steps would be performed the same regardless of the type of data stored in the database or the level of detail of data presented to users. Further, the structural elements remain the same regardless of the type of data stored in the database or the level of detail of data presented to users. Thus, this descriptive material will not distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art in terms of patentability, see *In re Gulack*, 703 F.2d 1381, 1385, 217 USPQ 401, 404 (Fed. Cir. 1983); *In re Lowry*, 32 F.3d 1579, 32 USPQ2d 1031 (Fed. Cir. 1994); MPEP § 2106.

The concept of mapping processes (identifying and cataloguing processes) with the intention of redesigning/reengineering/eliminating processes that are inefficient, fail to meet performance standards (such as customer satisfaction), or are important/unimportant is old and well known in the art (Business Process Reengineering); furthermore, it was known at the time of the invention that merely providing an automated way to replace a well-known activity which accomplishes the same result is not sufficient to distinguish over the prior art. *In re Venner*, 262 F.2d 91, 95, 120 USPQ 193, 194 (CCPA 1958).

Computers, electronic databases, and computer networks are means of automating manual processes, and thus do not render the claim patentable.

Furthermore, it is well settled that it is not "invention" to broadly provide a mechanical or automatic means to replace manual activity which has accomplished the same result. *In re Venner*, 120 USPQ 192.

As per claim 17, Cross et al. does not explicitly teach the system of claim 16, wherein data is presented as a series of drilldown screens, including:

- (a) a core processes screen, listing identified core processes;
- (b) an individual core process screen, accessible from the core processes screen, listing projects that have been identified for an individual core process; and
- (c) a project screen, accessible from the individual core process screen, displaying data relating to an individual project.

Official Notice is taken that the practice of presenting raw data, project-specific summary data, and overall data in distinct/separate sections is old and well known in the art. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to modify the teachings of Cross et al. to present raw data, project-specific summary data, and overall data in distinct/separate sections because the resulting combination would provide users with simplified, summarized visualizations of data to users, and enable users to dictate the level of details they wish to see (overall summary, project/process-specific summary, project/process-specific raw data).

Official Notice is taken that it is old and well known in the Internet arts that hyperlinks are used to connect web pages. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to modify the teachings of Cross et al. to link web pages together because the resulting combination would present data in a natural progression, as any two pages of information can be linked into a “trail” of related information, enabling the user to scroll between pages.

Cross et al. does not expressly teach the specific data recited in claims 17. However, these differences are only found in the non-functional descriptive material and are not functionally involved in the steps recited nor do they alter the recited structural elements. The recited method steps would be performed the same regardless of the means of presentation. Further, the structural elements remain the same regardless of the means of presentation. Thus, this descriptive material will not distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art in terms of patentability, see *In re Gulack*, 703 F.2d 1381, 1385, 217 USPQ 401, 404 (Fed. Cir. 1983); *In re Lowry*, 32 F.3d 1579, 32 USPQ2d 1031 (Fed. Cir. 1994); MPEP § 2106.

It was known at the time of the invention that merely providing an automated way to replace a well-known activity which accomplishes the same result is not sufficient to distinguish over the prior art. *In re Venner*, 262 F.2d 91, 95, 120 USPQ 193, 194 (CCPA 1958).

Computers, electronic databases, and computer networks are means of automating manual processes, and thus do not render the claim patentable.

Furthermore, it is well settled that it is not "invention" to broadly provide a mechanical or automatic means to replace manual activity which has accomplished the same result. *In re Venner*, 120 USPQ 192.

6. Claims 3-5, and 8-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cross et al. as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of William Kettinger, James Teng, and Subashish Guha's "Business Process Change: A study of Methodologies, Techniques, and Tools" (reference 2-U; hereafter referred to as Kettinger et al.).

As per claim 3, Cross et al. teaches the method of claim 1, wherein step (a) further comprises:

(a) entering identified touchpoints into a table (**mapping of the activities performed in a loan approval process; develop a baseline process map that shows how things are currently being done**) [Paragraphs 13, 17]

Although Cross et al. does not explicitly teach the step of (b) listing modes of communication used to effect each identified touchpoint, Kettinger et al. teaches a

“Diagnose” stage that documents the current process and sub-processes in terms of process attributes such as activities, resources, communication, roles, IT and cost [Paragraphs 14, 36].

Both Cross et al. and Kettinger et al. are directed towards the art of redesigning business processes; therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to modify the teachings of Cross et al. to list the modes of communication used to effect each touchpoint, because the resulting combination would enable a company to identify non-value-adding activities and causes of problems, which further identify areas for improvement (by redesign, or developing new processes).

As per claim 4, Cross et al. teaches the method of claim 3, wherein step (b) further comprises:

(b) identifying projects that eliminate touchpoints (**redesign roles to reduce handoffs; streamline the process**) [Paragraph 30].

Although not explicitly taught by Cross et al., Kettinger et al. teaches a “Diagnose” stage that analyzes the inventory of touchpoints and the modes of communications used to effect each touchpoint (**documents the current process and sub-processes in terms of process attributes such as activities, resources, communication, roles, IT and cost**) [Paragraphs 14, 36].

Both Cross et al. and Kettinger et al. are directed towards the art of redesigning business processes; therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to modify the teachings of Cross et al. to analyze the modes of communication used to effect each touchpoint, because the resulting combination would enable a company to identify non-value-adding activities and causes of problems, which further identify areas for improvement (by redesign, or developing new processes).

As per claim 5, Cross et al. teaches the method of claim 3, wherein step (b) further comprises:

(c) identifying projects that convert non-web-enabled touchpoints into web-enabled touchpoints (**consider maintaining electronic files to reduce the hard-dollar expense of photocopying as well as the soft-dollar expense of time spent maintaining copies of files throughout the process; deciding whether the use of artificial intelligence {such as automated systems for evaluation} could accelerate the process and make decision-making easier; use of workflow management tools (laptops) to improve production process; using electronic data transmission to edit and transmit data or documents between remote locations; monitoring turnaround time; eliminate documentation errors and need for hard-copy files**) [Paragraphs 25, 35, 36, 41]

As per:

- (a) analyzing the inventory of touchpoints and the modes of communications used to effect each touchpoint [see analysis of claim 4(a) above] and
- (b) classifying touchpoints as web-enabled and non-web-enabled.

Although not explicitly taught by Cross et al., Kettinger et al. teaches a “Diagnose” stage that analyzes the inventory of touchpoints and the modes of communications used to effect each touchpoint (**documents the current process and sub-processes in terms of process attributes such as activities, resources, communication, roles, IT and cost**) [Paragraphs 14, 36]. The documentation of processes and sub-processes in terms of IT would classify said processes and sub-processes as being web-enabled or non-web-enabled, meeting the limitation of the claim.

Both Cross et al. and Kettinger et al. are directed towards the art of redesigning business processes; therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to modify the teachings of Cross et al. to analyze the modes of communication used to effect each touchpoint, because the resulting combination would enable a company to identify non-value-adding activities and causes of problems, which further identify areas for improvement (by redesign, or developing new processes).

As per claim 8, although not explicitly taught by Cross et al., Kettinger et al. teaches the method of claim 6, wherein step (c) further comprises:

- (a) developing a list of top level indicators (**critical success factors; a set of 11 contingency factors in project planning**) based upon identified customer needs that are critical to quality [Paragraphs 26, 38, Figure 4];
- (b) assigning weights to each top level indicator (**for each factor, a score between 1 and 5 may be assigned; each factor may be weighted equally, or unequal weights may be used**) [Paragraphs 38, 39, Figure 4];
- (c) for each identified project, determining a numerical quantity indicating the relationship strength between the identified project and each top level indicator (**processes that are essential are marked by the letter E, and desirable processes are marked by the letter D; assign a value of 2 to “E” and a value of 1 to “D”**) [Paragraph 26]; and
- (d) using the assigned weights and the relationship strengths to calculate a score for each identified project (**resulting row totals reflect the overall strategic relevance of the process to the various critical success factors, with highest row totals receiving top priority in project selection; Process Change Strategy = (Avg. Score of Contingency Factors + Risk Propensity)/2**) [Paragraph 26, Figure 4].

Both Cross et al. and Kettinger et al. are directed towards the art of redesigning business processes; therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to modify the teachings of Cross et al. to develop lists of top

level indicators and assign weights to said indicators for quantifying the relationship strength between projects and indicators, because the resulting invention would enable a company to identify non-value-adding activities and prioritize projects/processes, which further identify areas for improvement (by redesign, or developing new processes).

Claim 14 recites similar limitations; therefore, the same rejection applies.

As per claim 9, although not explicitly taught by Cross et al., Kettinger et al. teaches the method of claim 6, wherein step (c) further comprises: placing each identified project into a high priority matrix (**process prioritization matrix**) to maximize return on effort (**lead to the final selection of a process to be reengineered**) [Paragraph 26].

Both Cross et al. and Kettinger et al. are directed towards the art of redesigning business processes; therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to modify the teachings of Cross et al. to place projects into a high priority matrix, because the resulting combination would provide a concise, visual tool that would enable a company to focus attention on areas/projects where improvement efforts can be most productive.

Claim 15 recites similar limitations; therefore, the same rejection applies.

As per claim 10, although not explicitly taught by Cross et al., Kettinger et al. teaches the method of claim 6, wherein step (c) further comprises:

ranking the identified projects in order of priority (**processes that are essential are marked by the letter E, and desirable processes are marked by the letter D; assign a value of 2 to “E” and a value of 1 to “D”**) [Paragraph 26].

Both Cross et al. and Kettinger et al. are directed towards the art of redesigning business processes; therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to modify the teachings of Cross et al. to rank projects in order of priority, because the resulting combination would provide enable a company to focus attention on areas/projects where improvement efforts can be most productive.

As per claim 11, Cross et al. teaches a method for increasing productivity of a business organization and customer satisfaction, comprising:

- (b) designating employees of the business organization to be core process owners, who are accountable for increasing business productivity and customer satisfaction [see analysis of claim 2 above];
- (c) identifying and making an inventory of touchpoints [see analysis of claim 1(a) above];

- (d) identifying projects, based upon the inventory of touchpoints, to increase business productivity and customer satisfaction by eliminating or redesigning identified touchpoints [see analysis of claim 1(b) above];
- (e) validating and prioritizing projects based upon an analysis of customers' critical requirements and overall financial impact on the business organization [see analysis of claim 1(c) above];
- (f) rigorously executing the prioritized projects [see analysis of claim 1(d) above]; and
- (g) measuring increases of productivity and customer satisfaction [see analysis of claim 1(e) above].

Although not explicitly taught by Cross et al., Kettinger et al. teaches (a) the step of identifying core processes of the business organization (**Core Process Analysis**) [Table 3].

Both Cross et al. and Kettinger et al. are directed towards the art of redesigning business processes; therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to modify the teachings of Cross et al. to identify core processes of the business organization, because the resulting combination would enable a company to identify areas/projects that are inefficient, ineffective, are candidates for redesign/elimination, and where improvement efforts can be most productive.

As per claim 12, Cross et al. teaches the method of claim 11, wherein step (c) further comprises:

- (a) entering identified touchpoints into a table [see analysis of claim 3(a) above];
- (b) listing modes of communication used to effect each touchpoint [see analysis of claim 3(b) above]; and
- (c) classifying each touchpoint as web-enabled touchpoints into web-enabled touchpoints [see analysis of claim 5(b) above].

As per claim 13, Cross et al. teaches the method of claim 12, wherein step (d) further comprises:

identifying projects that converts non-web-enabled touchpoints to web-calculated touchpoints [see analysis of claim 5(c) above].

Conclusion

7. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Michael Hammer and Jeff Goding's (reference 2-V) discusses the Six Sigma technique in manufacturing. The concepts of DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control) methodology and DFSS (Design for Six Sigma) are also discussed.

Richard Chang (reference 2-W) discusses the decision making process between deciding to improve or reengineer processes.

Jeffery Selander and Kelvin Cross (reference 2-X) discuss the importance of process mapping and value analysis in process redesign.

A.C Hyde (references 3-U and 3-V) discusses the steps of process reengineering.

Dev Strischek and Rob Cross (reference 3-W) discuss the value of reengineering.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Peter Choi whose telephone number is (571) 272 6971. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8-5.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on (571) 272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Peter Choi
Examiner
Art Unit 3623

PC
January 23, 2006



TARIQ R. HAFIZ
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3600

DETAILED ACTION

37 CFR § 1.105 – Requirement for Information

1. Applicant and the assignee of this application are required under 37 CFR 1.105 to provide the following information that the examiner has determined is reasonably necessary to the examination of this application.

During a preliminary search of the subject matter disclosed in the claims submitted December 21, 2001, several publications were found disclosing that GE has been practicing the concepts of the claimed invention during a period of at least one year prior to application filing date.

Marianne Mcgee has published 3 articles, on September 18, 2000 (reference 1-U), September 25, 2000 (reference 1-V), and November 27, 2000 (reference 1-W). In these articles, Mcgee discloses that:

- GE is analyzing jobs throughout the company to identify where automation will work best. The company is aggressively identifying “analog touchpoints” in tasks that require human intervention and deciding how to Web-enable as many as possible.

- As of September 25, 2000, GE has squeezed out \$30 million in savings over the previous two years by reducing the number of “touchpoints”, or process steps, and replacing them with e-business processes.
- GE Capital’s mortgage business eliminated 60% of the 200 analog steps in its mortgage application-approval process by moving much of the work to the Web, by reducing the number of “analog touchpoints” during the course of the preceding months of evaluation.

Thus, it has been established that GE has been analyzing business processes in order to identify “analog touchpoints” for reduction/elimination and Web-enable said reduced/eliminated processes at least since September 2000.

2. The information is required to complete the background description in the disclosure by documenting the process and procedure used by GE during this time period to identify “analog touchpoints” for replacement with e-business processes.
3. The information is required to identify products and services embodying the disclosed subject matter of identifying “analog touchpoints” for reduction/elimination and replaced by Web-enabled e-business processes and identify the properties of similar products and services found in the prior art.

4. In response to this requirement, please provide the names of any products or services that have incorporated the claimed subject matter.

5. The applicant is reminded that the reply to this requirement must be made with candor and good faith under 37 CFR 1.56. Where the applicant does not have or cannot readily obtain an item of required information, a statement that the item is unknown or cannot be readily obtained may be accepted as a complete reply to the requirement for that item.

6. This requirement is subject to the provisions of 37 CFR 1.134, 1.135 and 1.136 and has a shortened statutory period of 2 months. EXTENSIONS OF THIS TIME PERIOD MAY BE GRANTED UNDER 37 CFR 1.136(a).

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Peter Choi whose telephone number is (571) 272 6971. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8-5.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on (571) 272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Peter Choi
Examiner
Art Unit 3623

PC
January 18, 2006



TARIQ R. HAFIZ
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3600